

Welcome or Rejection?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 March 2026

Preacher: Joshua Winters

[0 : 00] Well, last Sunday we heard about how Jesus began to shift his attention towards Jerusalem and the people living in the towns and cities around it. We heard about how Jesus was not welcomed by the people of one town in Samaria.

And we heard Jesus talk about the commitment required to be one of his disciples. We're going to pick up the story here in Luke chapter 10, starting in verse 1.

Let me just read the first number of verses here for us.

For the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you.

Heal the sick who are there and tell them the kingdom of God has come near to you. But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you.

[1 : 58] Yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God has come near. So Jesus sends out this large group of disciples to the towns and places that he is soon to visit.

And as we talked about last week, the bulk of Jesus' ministry has been focused up in the north, in Galilee. But now he has his focus set on Jerusalem, where he will end up.

And on the people in the towns and the cities that are around Jerusalem. And Jesus intends to visit many of these towns as part of his journey towards Jerusalem.

And so these guys that he's sending out are kind of, in a sense, preparing the way for him. They're not going ahead just to find places for Jesus to stay, though.

This is more than just logistics. These guys are coming to each of these towns to begin the work of Jesus there, on his behalf. If you were here on January 18th, you might feel some deja vu as we read about this ministry trip.

[3 : 10] That's because this is the second ministry trip where Jesus sends guys out to visit towns. The first one we read about just in the previous chapter, Luke chapter 9. And there's some major similarities between these two trips.

In both cases, the guys that Jesus sends out are to travel light, taking almost nothing with them. In both cases, they're to rely on God to provide for their needs as they go from town to town.

In both cases, they're given authority by Jesus to cast out demons and to heal people who are sick. In both of these trips, they're to proclaim the message of the kingdom of God.

And Jesus gives specific instructions about what to do if the people don't respond well or if they reject them. But there's also some differences between these two trips.

And that's what we'll focus on this morning with this second trip. We've already mentioned the difference in location. One in the north, one in the south. But there's also the difference of who goes on this trip.

[4 : 18] Who is sent. On the first trip, Jesus sent the twelve apostles. But on this second trip, we read that he is sending 72 others. And that word, others, quite specific in the original language.

It means different than the ones already mentioned. And so these 72, it seems, did not include the twelve. The Lord appointed 72 others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

Now some of you might be staring at your Bible and wondering why the number is not 72 and is 70. This is one of those places. You might even have a footnote that explains at the bottom of the page.

Some manuscripts have 70 or some have 72. Basically, we don't have the original document that Luke penned. We have copies that were made of that.

And our earliest copy is too fragmented to even read it at this place. And the copies that we have later, well, we see both of these readings in them.

[5 : 27] And so some, where's along the line, somebody either left out the word two after 70. Or maybe added it in accidentally as he was looking down at the wrong line.

Because the number two is mentioned a couple times here in this verse. Scholars and people who do these kinds of things, they look at the evidence.

They try to weigh it, all the different manuscript copies that we have. And they're not sure which is the right number. This shouldn't worry us too much.

We believe that the true number was on Luke's page as he wrote it down. And it was either 70 or 72. But some things have been lost to us 2,000 years later.

We should also maybe note that this is why our modern English translations are updated from time to time. Committees of scholars sit down as new manuscripts are discovered.

[6 : 27] And they continue to catalog them. Sometimes we're able to settle these questions with confidence. And look back on them and yeah, we know for sure this is the number that it was.

But these variants are relatively few. And they have very little bearing on the overall meaning of the text. In the places where they occur.

Either way, this is a big difference from the previous time that Jesus sent men out. The first trip was 12. This one is about 70. And different men.

So put your imagination cap on here for a minute. Can you imagine what it would be like if within a relatively short period of time, two guys sent from the same man started showing up in cities and towns all over our province?

Traveling in pairs. Traveling in pairs. This means that once they branched off down the roads, there would be about 35 different locations all receiving this message of the kingdom and seeing miracles being done in Jesus' name.

[7 : 38] All on the same day. 35 different locations across the region. All witnessing healings and hearing two guys preaching about the kingdom of God in Jesus' name and how it has come near.

This would have stirred the whole nation. No wonder the religious leaders of the Jews were worried that everyone would believe in Jesus if they let Jesus go on like this.

No wonder they cried out in frustration while the crowds listened to Jesus with delight in the temple courts saying, See? This is getting us nowhere. The whole world has gone after him.

Jesus is stirring the nation in a very short period of time. His good news of the kingdom of God is making its way into every home. The people are talking at the dinner table about the miracles that they have witnessed.

And this is happening all across the nation. As Jesus sends them out on this trip, we notice that some of his instructions are different than we heard earlier in chapter 9. It's possible that Jesus said the same kinds of things on both occasions, but Luke gives us a little bit more here with the sending of the 72.

[8 : 55] Jesus, we notice, uses this analogy of bringing in the harvest. In verse 2, The harvest is plentiful, he says, but the workers are few.

Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. So Jesus seems to be saying here that many will respond to the message.

Many will believe in Jesus in these towns when these two guys come to each town to preach.

There's about to be a great multiplication of the followers of Jesus.

The harvest is plentiful. And it seems from Jesus' words that there's just not going to be enough of them to bring in the harvest. Think of all the questions that people might ask as these two guys show up.

But there's just two of them, and they're being probably swarmed by a whole bunch of people. He tells these 70 to pray and ask God to send out more workers.

[10 : 01] Then Jesus gives another analogy, telling about the danger that they will face. He says, Go, I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves.

So many will believe, but many will have the opposite reaction. Not just indifference, but opposition. These guys will roll into town, and some will be ready to tear them apart as they leave.

These disciples will arrive in peace with a message of peace. With no weapons of any kind, they will be like lambs, and many will meet them with mocking and insults and even threats.

Maybe this is part of why Jesus instructed them to travel light. They needed to be ready to leave if the welcome wears out when the wolves gather round.

We notice in verse 4 that they're not to take a purse or bag or sandals. These instructions are similar to the ones given to the 12 in chapter 9.

[11:13] They were to take no money, no backpack, no extra footwear. And here Jesus says, Do not greet anyone on the road.

We might think that's kind of odd. This is not a command to be unfriendly or to ignore people. But often, when we greet someone, what happens?

We start talking. It can often turn into a long conversation. That one thing needed at the grocery store turns into an hour away from the hungry family that's waiting at home for it.

Jesus doesn't want them to stop and talk on the roads because this mission is urgent. He wants them to do their talking, their preaching in the towns, in the hearing of everyone.

He's basically telling them to keep on moving, stay focused on the mission. Just as with the first trip, they're to stay at only one house.

[12:18] Traveling preachers of other varieties would often go house to house and try to get as much from the people as they could. And Jesus wants his men to stand apart from them.

This isn't for personal gain. He does allow them, however, to receive hospitality and food and lodging as their wages for the work that they're doing from one house in the town.

And just as with the previous trip, they are to proclaim the message of the kingdom of God that Jesus has been preaching. Specifically, that the kingdom of God has come near.

In other words, the things which God promised long ago to our forefathers are being fulfilled today. We come in the name of Jesus.

And they were to heal the sick in each town. The miracles of healing in Jesus' name served to confirm the message that they preached.

[13:22] This message comes with the power of God. And not only did they heal, but they also cast demons out.

We read about that in verse 17, which we won't get to today, but you can glance down there and see about that. Jesus also gives them a fuller explanation in this sending moment than the previous trip if the town rejects them.

We heard in the previous time they're to shake the dust off their feet. This time we read it's the same sort of thing. When you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you.

Yet be sure of this, the kingdom of God has come near. The shaking of the dust, if you weren't here in the previous message, was an act of completely disassociating oneself from the people of that town.

It was like saying, then I will have no part of you. Not even a little bit. And again, this is not a vindictive thing or a thing done in frustration by the apostles or an attempt to try to get the last word or to insult.

[14:42] Jesus is the one telling his messengers to say this if they are not welcomed. And they represent Jesus himself. They have been sent by him.

And therefore, if Jesus commands them to do that, it's really Jesus saying to the people of that town, since you will not listen to me and repent, I cannot claim you as my own.

And you cannot claim me as your own. There is now a complete separation between us. I withdraw my messengers and I leave you to face God's judgment without me.

Now that's a very sobering thing. But Jesus makes it clear here in verse 16. Whoever listens to you listens to me.

Whoever rejects you rejects me. But whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me. So, rejecting any of these pairs of guys when they come to town is a rejection of Jesus.

[15:52] Even more than that, it is a rejection of God himself who sent Jesus. This is their chance to turn to God and to be made right with him.

And Jesus wants every town who rejects him to know that. This is it. And Jesus explains here in great detail what will be for those towns, those people who reject him.

There will be a greater punishment on the day of judgment, he says, than there will be for some of the wicked cities in ancient history. Look at verse 12.

Jesus says, I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town. Now, these are shocking words.

But they help us realize the seriousness of this moment for all the people living in these towns back then. This was it. This was their opportunity to hear the good news of God and to repent and believe.

[17:04] This was their chance to be saved from the punishment deserved for their sins. Sodom, of course, was known for its terrible wickedness.

You could read about that in Genesis. It was destroyed by fire from heaven. And yet, Jesus says that the people of Sodom will fare better at the judgment than the towns that rejected him.

The ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon were also wicked cities known for their evil deeds.

And Jesus says this. He says, Woe to you, Chorazin, verse 13. Woe to you, Bethsaida. Those are both towns in Galilee. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. These are shocking words.

[18:15] He's basically saying that the people of Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented if they witnessed the miracles that Jesus did in Bethsaida and Chorazin.

They had more, in a sense, spiritual discernment in their day. This truly was a generation more unbelieving and corrupt than previous generations.

And then comes the hardest and most stinging rebuke of all. These are some hard words. Verse 15. Jesus says, And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No.

You will go down to Hades. Capernaum was a place Jesus lived for a while. It was his hometown for a part of his time here on earth.

It was the place where Peter was from, where his mother-in-law who fell ill was healed. It was that fishing town on the shore of Galilee. And it was the place where we read about in all the Gospels.

[19:21] Jesus did countless miracles there. Healings of all kinds. Every kind of illness, disease, disability. Many evil spirits were driven out of people there in Capernaum.

And all these people saw it. And yet Jesus says, Even after witnessing all that, you will go down to Hades. to hell.

Why? Because just having Jesus live among you isn't enough. Having Jesus preach in your streets isn't enough.

Having him perform many miracles among you isn't enough. You must repent. You must turn back to God. You must welcome Jesus and believe the message that he brings because he is sent from God.

Though Jesus lived there and did all those wonderful things there in Capernaum, they rejected Jesus on the whole. And Jesus says, they will go down to Hades.

[20:37] One commentary I think explains some of this very well. Cities that reject these messengers will have a more severe judgment because more and greater revelation has come to them making their sin worse.

They witnessed with their own eyes the miracles that Jesus and these apostles did and yet they still rejected him. And so Jesus says that when the day of judgment comes they will be judged appropriately.

They will get the punishment reserved for those who blatantly and defiantly push God's Son away. And again, this is not Jesus being vindictive by any means.

This is God giving what is deserved. True justice. Jesus. Well, how did this ministry trip go for these 70 guys?

We're going to look at that next week. Jesus actually debriefs the trip with them and there's conversation about it. For today though, let's just think about what some of these things that we've heard how this applies to us.

[21:52] When it comes to this passage, probably the first place we go in our minds is how we should be like these apostles and go out and share the good news of the kingdom.

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few is the classic Bible verse used to call people to participate in missionary work. Others, as they look at these verses, see a pattern to follow in going from place to place, sometimes even in pairs to preach the gospel.

And there's many questions stirred up by this passage. Is the harvest still plentiful today? What about all those missionaries that have gone out and preached for years with very little response?

What about all the times that we've shared with friends and neighbors and co-workers but they don't seem to care? Is the harvest still plentiful today? One thing that probably most agree on is that the workers are still few.

What does Jesus want us to do with this passage? Did he want it to become the template or the pattern for how we reach out and do ministry in our world today?

[23 : 16] Does he want us to go out two by two? Does he want us to travel light going from place to place and only staying at one house? Or are those instructions just for this time for these particular men and this particular trip?

I wonder if we get so focused on the apostles and what they did and whether we should be doing what they did that we miss the main truth of the whole moment.

Isn't the main truth of this moment in the story of Jesus that the king has come, that his kingdom is near, that salvation and forgiveness of sins is offered to those who repent and believe God's good news.

And yet the sobering truth of this passage is that while many accepted Jesus, many flat out rejected him. We see those two opposite responses in the towns of Galilee and in Judah.

Some welcomed him. They welcomed the men that he sent. Others rejected him, didn't even let him come into the town.

[24 : 40] We have that same choice before us, each one of us. We can welcome Jesus and listen to him or we can push him away.

But Jesus wants us to know that if we reject him, we reject God who sent him. And so I think the big question that this passage really leads us to in this moment in the story is what is your response to Jesus?

As his words come to the door of your heart, what is your response to him? Have you opened the door of your heart to Jesus? Have you welcomed him in?

Do you accept even his difficult words about you? About how we all have sinned against God? Do you accept his words about how you need to turn back to God and seek his forgiveness? Do you believe Jesus' message of the kingdom that it's near, that it's coming?

[26 : 13] Do you believe Jesus' words about hell? And how those who reject him will go there?

What is your response to Jesus? For others, the big question of this passage is not whether we should do as the apostles did, but maybe the question is how can a loving God bring judgment on people and punish them with hell?

That word, that gets to us. I read an article earlier this week about how some have embraced an alternative, progressive Christianity, and the author of that article said that the critical issue is how we define love.

He said progressive Christians tend to hear the word love and define it primarily as compassion, empathy, and understanding, which then becomes affirmation, tolerance, and acceptance.

But he says by that definition, any moral boundary imposed on somebody starts to feel unloving. He says that's not the biblical definition of love.

[27 : 41] The biblical definition of love is more than just an emotion. It's in the words of Aquinas, a conscious decision to will the good of the other, which sometimes means saying the hard thing and not the comfortable thing.

For example, no one would look at an 80-pound anorexic girl who believes she's overweight and say the loving thing is to affirm that. We all understand that sometimes the most loving thing that you can do is to refuse to affirm what someone genuinely believes about themselves, because affirming that might destroy them.

He says anyone who's loved an addict knows that removing every boundary doesn't set someone free. It just removes the only things that might have saved them.

It's a prison with no walls, a place where you can wander anywhere but no one can ever tell you you've gone the wrong way. Well, I think those words are very thought provoking.

Progressive Christians are right that love is compassion and it is empathy and it is understanding. But real love is more. It has those things but real love also strongly desires the good of the other.

[29 : 10] So much that it's willing to speak the hard but needed truth in order to save the other or spare them from harm. the reality of our lives as human beings is that we have all sinned against God.

We have all become corrupt and bent and broken by sin and God is perfectly good and righteous and just and he because he is those things must give us what we deserve.

If he didn't he would be corrupt. In order to be completely good you must love what is good and you must hate what is evil.

You must oppose what is evil. God is completely good and we by our sins have become not good. We have become evil sinners and so we are deserving of punishment. That's part of the message of Christ too.

[30 : 22] And yet God's mercy and love for us is so great that he wants none of us to get what we deserve from him. He sent Jesus down into our world to save us.

Down into our world to live among us. To take the punishment that we deserve upon himself so that justice could be done for our sins without us facing it ourselves.

But to receive this gift of grace we must do as Jesus said and repent. We must welcome him. We must listen to his words.

We must turn to God and seek his forgiveness. We must acknowledge our sins to him. And so Jesus coming and sending his apostles through the land with this message of good news.

Even with those words of warning for those who reject that is the most loving thing that God can do.

He is refusing to affirm what we genuinely believe about ourselves which is that we can be okay if we ignore God and just keep on sinning.

[31 : 33] He's refusing to affirm what we genuinely believe about ourselves because affirming that would lead to our destruction. Real love speaks the truth even when it's not what we want to hear.

And Jesus always did that because he really truly loves us. And so it pushes us back to that first question.

What is your response to Jesus? Welcome rejection. Welcome to the Lord. Or rejection. Let's pray. Lord, these are not the words that we like to hear. Some of us may even feel embarrassed to hear some of these words in public spoken aloud. But these are your words to us through your son who you sent.

and I pray that we would take them to heart and that you would make us first of all stop and ask that question to ourselves before you of where we stand with you.

[32 : 47] May every one of us bow before you, acknowledge the sins that we have done, not just once but continually, and may we follow you.

May we believe in your son. And we ask too that you would make us wise with these words, Lord, so that as we look out at the world around us and our relationships, our friends, our family who don't know you, make us wise.

Teach us about how we can relate to them. Give us courage, give us boldness, help us not to affirm them and they're walking away from you.

Give us what we need to be salt and light and to speak the truth in love. We ask for this in your name.

Amen.